CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

July 8, 2003
MEETING NO. 07-2003

APPLICATION:	HDC2003-00253
DATE FILED:	June 24, 2003
APPLICANT/ OWNER:	Albert Brault and James Wilson 110 S. Washington Street Rockville, MD 20850

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The subject property is a single-family residence that has been converted to office use. It faces west on South Washington Street at the corner of Vinson Street. It is located at the end of a row of contemporary late 19th and very early 20th century homes, all of which have undergone similar conversions to offices. It is across the street from Christ Episcopal Church.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS AT THIS ADDRESS

HDC95-00073	Conversion from single family dwelling to business
HDC95-000667	Demolition of garage for additional parking space
HDC96-00088	Construction of trash can containment area
HDC97-00103	Removal of hazardous Kentucky coffee tree
HDC98-00130	Brass signs on front and rear porches

REQUEST

The applicants request approval to replace the slate shingle roof with fiberglass asphalt shingles (sample submitted).

Details of current roof materials and conditions

STAFF COMMENTS

1. *Historic, archeological, or architectural value and significance of the site or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area.*

The building at 110 S. Washington Street, known as the Linthicum House, was the former home of two generations of the Linthicum family. Dr. Otis Linthicum had the house built in 1903 using elements of the Neoclassical and Colonial Revival styles. The property passed to his son Dr. William Linthicum in 1926. In 1995, the building was converted to office use. The former residence contributes to the National Register and locally designated South Washington Street Historic District for its representative high-style early 20th century architecture. The other buildings in this district include several other large residences which now house offices, Christ Episcopal Church, and the Post Office. The Linthicum House matches the other houses in the district in its date of construction, style, scale, and materials.

2. *The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the remainder of the entire structure and to the surrounding area.*

All of the former residences within the South Washington Historic District are large frame buildings with their original siding. Some have had roof replacements using incompatible composition shingles. Christ Episcopal Church retains a slate roof, as does the tower on 100 S. Washington Street. Requests for Certificates of Approval for roof replacements or any exterior work are handled on a case-by-case basis and a prior HDC decision should not be considered as precedent for a current request.

The Linthicum House and the house at 101 S. Washington are the only two former residences that retain complete slate shingle roofs. The roof on the Linthicum House is likely the original from 1903, although parts appear to have been replaced with slate on the south and east sides. The original slate shingles are in poor condition, and exhibit delamination and cracking. Some shingles are missing.

What sets the roof at the subject property apart is its high visibility from three sides. The building is situated on a corner and a rear parking lot provides unobstructed visibility from the rear. The steeply pitched hip roof also contributes to increased visibility of roof surface. The roof has interesting caps along its ridges. These round metal caps cover the joints at roof ridges while metal flashing is located in the valleys formed at roof intersections. None of the other buildings in the district have this interesting demarcation along the roofline.

3. *The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used*

The applicants propose to replace the slate shingles with a product called Slateline, produced by GAF Materials Corporation. The proposed replacement is a 5-tab shingle of fiberglass asphalt

construction. The selected color, called English Gray Slate, is a mottled gray. The dimensions are 17 x 40" with a thickness of approximately 1/8". The fate of the roof ridges with their defining ridge caps and the roof valleys with metal flashing is unknown.

According to Technical Brief #2, *Guidelines for Historic Property Owners – Roofing*, adopted by the HDC, "original roofing materials are highly significant architectural features of the historic house." HDC policy states that "every effort should be made to preserve the original roofing with replacement or repairs in-kind," but if owners request a replacement, the selected material should match the texture and color of the original roofing.

The selected fiberglass asphalt shingle neither matches nor resembles in texture the original slate. The asphalt shingles are rough and granular in texture and do not imitate the reflectivity or stonelike qualities of slate. They are uniform in their appearance and do not replicate the uniqueness of individual slate shingles with their uneven surface texture and chiseled edges. The proposed shingles are not historic in their appearance, technology, or material. The size of the exposure may also be incompatible with the current exposure of the slate.

In addition, the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*, which the HDC has also adopted as guidance, state the following:

> Standard 2 – The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided; and
>
> Standard 6 – Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.

Per Technical Brief #2, Staff would like the applicants to justify the request to replace rather than repair the roof and their choice of fiberglass asphalt shingles over slate or imitation slate. According to the applicants' representative, Ms. Debbie Cambus, there is a leak in the roof, which has caused some interior damage. The condition of the slate may not be the cause of the water infiltration. It may be worn or bent flashings, leaky gutters, or poor attic ventilation which is causing moisture to escape through an interior wall.

It is advisable that the source of the water infiltration be identified and that this problem be addressed. If the source is traced to damaged slate, the applicants could repair or replace with slate the shingles on just that section of the roof, as well as replace individual missing or damaged slate on the rest of the roof. If it is not possible to locate the direct source of the leak, perhaps an entire side of the complex roof could be replaced with slate rather than the entire roof and the remainder of the roof spot repaired.

According to the National Park Service's Preservation Brief 16, *The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors,* only after all preservation options have been thoroughly explored

should replacement with a substitute material be considered. This brief provides information on selecting appropriate matching materials that imitate the visual and physical characteristics of the original material.

Contractor estimates would be useful to see for both repair and replacement with slate, imitation slate, and the proposed asphalt shingle.

4. To any other factors, including aesthetic factors, which the Commission deems to be pertinent.

Staff would like to reiterate an offer to share with the applicants a demo CD for Slate Savers, a company that repairs and retains slate roofs by injecting them with epoxy. This method would seal the roof from leaks and preserve the original materials in situ. Replacing missing shingles and ensuring adequate ventilation would likely be required if this option is pursued.

Staff would also like to make it clear that repairing a slate roof is eligible for County, State, and Federal tax credits while replacing it with modern materials is not. The applicants would be eligible for the 10% County property tax credits for repairing the slate, but do not believe they are eligible for the 20% State or 20% Federal income tax credits because the estimated roof work would not cost more than the adjusted basis of the property.

The tax guidelines state that "rehabilitation expenditures must exceed the greater of $5,000 or the adjusted basis of the building and its structural components. The adjusted basis is generally the purchase price, minus the cost of land, plus improvements already made, minus depreciation already taken." Staff would like to ensure this formula was followed in determining the adjusted basis so as to take advantage of all possible economic benefits available to the applicants. The State and Federal tax credits may also be applicable for the interior repairs for water damage that have already been completed.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff does not recommend the approval of HDC2003-0253 to replace the historic slate roof with the proposed fiberglass asphalt shingle. The selected material is incompatible with the historic slate in composition, appearance, and texture.

Replacement with slate is the best option, and may become more economically feasible if the costs are determined to exceed the adjusted basis of the property using the formula above and the applicants apply for tax credits. Slate lasts upwards of 80 years, twice as long as the proposed replacement material.

Replacement with imitation slate is the next best option as this rubber-based material more closely imitates the historic qualities of real slate, including dimension, surface texture, color, and overall appearance. Several examples are included.

The roof ridge caps are a significant feature of this building and should be retained and re-used regardless of the roof repair or replacement material.

If the Certificate of Approval is denied, staff would like to request the applicants grant a 45-day extension to their application so that a solution can be found that is both appropriate to this significant historic building and economically acceptable to the applicants.

The National Park Service's Technical Brief 29 – *The Repair, Replacement & Maintenance of HistoricSlate Roofs* and Techincal Brief 16 – *The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors* are enclosed for reference.